

**O&C Right-of-Way Permit
Copper Queen Road**

EA# OR-118-03-012.

August 2003

Proposed agency actions:	reconstruct and realign an existing powerline road accessing Indian Hill, LLC property
Type of statement:	Environmental Assessment
Lead agency:	U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management Medford District, Glendale Resource Area
For further information:	Lynda L. Boody Glendale Field Manager BLM District Office

Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need for Action

1.0 Purpose and Need for the Proposal

Indian Hill, LCC – has requested access to their property via an existing powerline road on public land. To use this road for log hauling, which is Indian Hill LCC’s purpose, some changes are needed to improve the road.

1.1 Plan Conformance

The proposed action is in conformance with the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) dated June 1995. It falls under Administrative Actions that are in conformance with the plan “including but not limited to:...lands and realty actions, including issuance of grants, leases, and permits and resolution of trespass; facility maintenance...” (pg.6).

1.2 Decisions to be made on this Analysis

The proposed activities are in conformance with and tiered to the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (USDI, USDA 2001) and the *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (RMP) (USDI 1995b). These Resource Management Plans incorporate the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (NWFP) (USDA and USDI 1994). These documents are available at the Medford BLM office and the Medford BLM web site at <<http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/>>.

1.3 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations and Other Plans

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to determine whether the proposed action or any of the alternatives would have a significant effect on the human environment and thus require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as prescribed in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The proposed action and alternatives are in conformance with the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District by the Oregon and California Lands Act of 1937 (O&C Act) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). This document complies with the Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and the Department of the Interior’s manual guidance on the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (516 DM 1-7).

1.4 Decisions to be made Based on this Analysis

1. Whether or not the impacts of the proposed action are significant to the human environment beyond those impacts addressed in previous NEPA documents. (If the impacts are determined to be insignificant, then a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be issued and a decision can be implemented. If any impacts are determined to be significant to the human environment, then an Environmental Impact Statement must be prepared before the Glendale Field Manager makes a decision.)
2. Whether to implement the proposed action, implement another alternative to the proposed alternative, or defer to the no action alternative.

Chapter 2 - Alternatives

2.0 Comparison of the Alternatives

This chapter describes the alternatives under consideration. Descriptions focus on potential actions, outputs, and any related mitigation.

2.1 Alternative 1: No Action

Under this alternative, the management actions described under the action alternatives would not take place at this time. However, the opportunity for reconstruction and realignment of the BLM road 34-6-15 would continue to be a viable option for the future but would be analyzed through a separate environmental analysis.

2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The Glendale Resource Area proposes to issue a permit for the reconstruction and realignment of about 3,850 feet of BLM road 34-6-15.

2.2.1 Project Design Features For Road Work

Project design features (PDFs) are specific measures included in the design of the proposed action to minimize adverse impacts on the human environment. Many project design features for projects in the Medford District are specified in the RMP and may not be repeated in this EA. These include Best Management Practices (BMP) as described in Appendix D of the RMP.

If changes to the PDFs are needed during project implementation, they would be reviewed by the Field Manager prior to approval.

Cultural Resources

If at anytime during project operation cultural material is unearthed the project would be suspended immediately and a BLM Archaeologist will be contacted to evaluate the unearthed materials.

Wildlife

Use of power equipment for road renovation within 1/4 mile of any northern spotted owl nest would be limited to the period between June 15 and February 28 of the following year, or until a Glendale Resource Area biologist determines that young have sufficiently dispersed. This same seasonal restriction applies to blasting within one mile of an active nest.

Water Quality

The work period for road renovation and drainage improvement (unless in-stream work is required) would be from May 15 to October 15 of the same year to ensure that soil-disturbing activities are completed before the rainy season. The instream work period for culvert replacement would be between June 15 and September 15 of the same year, in accordance with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife guidelines.

The work period for quarry operations would be June 15 to October 15 of the same year.

Hauling would occur May 15 to October 15, weather permitting.

Road renovation would include outsloping where feasible, replacing and adding culverts and water-barring.

Waterdips would be created to prevent rilling.

Excess excavated material generated from reconstruction activities would either be spread in stable locations within the existing road prism or hauled to a stable designated waste disposal area.

Equipment refueling would be done where there is a minimal chance that toxic materials could enter a stream. Equipment would not be stored in a stream channel overnight. Hydraulic fluid and fuel lines would be kept in proper working condition in order to minimize leakage into streams.

Soil contaminated by excessive leakage of diesel, oil, hydraulic fluid and other hazardous materials as a result of equipment failure or human error would be removed from the site and disposed of in an approved site.

Cutting vegetation on road fill slopes would be minimized in order to maintain slope stability and stream shading.

Work would be temporarily suspended if monitoring indicates that rainstorms have saturated soils in the work area to the extent that there is potential for road damage or for excessive stream sedimentation.

All soil disturbance associated with road drainage improvement and culvert installation or replacement would be within the existing road Rights-of-Way, with moderate to small excavations and fills.

Where needed alder and other vegetation would be removed from ditch lines to ensure proper road drainage. Ditch lines would be pulled and cleared of obstructions where identified in the contract.

Energy dispersal pads would be placed at culvert outlets where necessary to reduce potential for soil erosion.

All stream crossing culverts would be designed to pass a 100-year flood.

Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds

Heavy equipment would be washed prior to entering federal lands, removing soil plant parts to prevent the spread of noxious weeds into the project area.

Bare soil areas would be mulched with material (e.g. straw, bark, wood chips) which is free of noxious weeds.

Chapter 3 - Affected Environment

3.0 Affected Environment

This section describes relevant resource components of the existing (baseline) environment.

The location of the proposed action is:

Analytical watershed:	Grave Creek fifth field watershed
Project area (sixth field watershed):	Grave-Sunny Valley
County:	Josephine
Legal description:	T34S, R6W, Section 15

The proposed project location is parallel to and about ¼ mile west of Interstate 5 immediately south of the Sunny Valley Exit. Road 34-6-15 generally follows an existing road along the powerline in the Rat Creek 7th field subwatershed. The area is forested with moderately erosive soil in the Speaker/Josephine complex. The proposed road would cross three intermittent streams.

Rat Creek provides habitat for steelhead and cutthroat trout from Grave Creek to near the project area and also for coho salmon (an ESA federally threatened species) in the lower 0.2 mile of the stream, about 1 mile from the project area. Grave Creek supports steelhead and cutthroat trout, coho and chinook salmon, as well as other aquatic species.

The proposed road renovation would occur within late successional habitat. The contiguous habitat block is approximately 320 acres. The area is suitable red tree vole habitat. Some of the trees to be removed during road construction are suitable nest trees for red tree voles. Ground surveys for red tree voles located 2 nest structures, but no resin ducts were found that would indicate positive use by red tree voles. No survey and manage mollusks were found in the area potentially impacted by the proposed reconstruction.

There are no known spotted owl sites within .25 miles of the proposed road reconstruction, although the area is within suitable spotted owl nesting habitat.

Vascular and nonvascular surveys were completed for the project area and no survey and manage species were found.

Chapter 4 - Environmental Consequences

4.0 Environmental Consequences

This chapter provides the scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons of the alternatives. This section also describes the probable consequences of each alternatives on selected environmental issues.

Table 4-1 Critical Elements

The following elements of the human environment are subject to requirements specified in statute, regulation, or executive order and must be considered in all EAs. The Y = yes and N= no designates whether each resource or issue would be affected under each specified alternative. For the elements marked yes, see the discussion following the table.

Resource or Issue Affected by Alternative	Alternative		Resource or Issue Affected by Alternative		Alternative	
	1	2			1	2
Air Quality	N	N	Threatened and Endangered Species	Fish	N	N
				Wildlife	N	Y
				Plants	N	N
ACEC	N	N	Wastes Hazardous / Solid		N	N
Cultural	N	N	Water Quality		N	Y
Farmlands, Prime / Unique	N	N	Riparian Zones		N	N
Floodplains	N	N	Wild and Scenic Rivers		N	N
Native American Religious Concerns	N	N	Wilderness		N	N
Energy	N	N	Essential Fish Habitat		N	N
Survey and Manage Species	N	Y				

4.1 Wildlife

Alternative 1: No Action

No impacts are anticipated from this alternative.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Threatened and Endangered Species

Northern spotted owl surveys were conducted in the proposed project area, and no owls were found. The nearest known owl site is approximately 1.1 miles away. Past surveys indicate no owl pairs, and only temporary single owl responses.

Survey and Manage Wildlife

Mollusk surveys were completed, and no S&M mollusks were found. A Red tree vole survey was conducted. No red tree vole nests were found. Two unknown nests were found in trees immediately adjacent to the road. No nests were found in adjacent and surrounding trees that might indicate a population of red tree voles. The two trees would be removed under the proposed action and loss of 2 possible nest structures would occur. The impact to the viability of any possible red tree vole populations would be very minimal, and impact to habitat suitability would be negligible.

Late Successional Habitat

The action would occur within a contiguous block of late successional habitat, approximately 320 acres in size. Age classes vary throughout the habitat, with pockets of 40 to 60 year old trees, 120+ year old age class trees in varying densities throughout, and scattered older remnant trees. Approximately 17 trees marked for cutting are over 20" in diameter. These trees are dispersed throughout the proposed road renovation, and impacts are minor, and spread throughout the approximate ¾ mile of road. Removal of trees for the road renovation would slightly degrade the suitability of the habitat for spotted owls, but it would continue to function as suitable nesting habitat.

4.2 Water Quality

Alternative 1: No-Action

The erosion that is currently occurring would likely continue at about the same rate since the powerline access road is currently not surfaced. The access to this road system is gated which helps to keep erosion at a minimum on the powerline access.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Some sediment would be expected to leave the road prism. Mulching of disturbed areas would minimize sedimentation since activities would occur primarily on mid-slope ground. However, a small amount of sediment that enters three intermittent streams during road realignment and culvert installation would be transported to Rat Creek during the first fall rain.

The discharge volume, sediment storage and routing capability of small intermittent streams that would be affected by road realignment, combined with use of appropriate project design features (see section 2.2.1) during road renovation, widening and realignment would result in a small amount of sediment being delivered to Rat Creek over an extended time, rather than as a pulse. Additionally, flow contributed to Rat Creek by other tributaries would rapidly dissipate and dilute sediment concentration. Although there could be minor short term adverse effects on cutthroat and steelhead spawning success in Rat Creek at the upper limit of their distribution, there would be none in the long term and no effect whatsoever on coho, steelhead or cutthroat eggs or fry in lower Rat Creek and in Grave Creek because any sediment reaching these

locations would be indistinguishable from background levels, having been diluted and dispersed by flow that is several magnitudes higher than in upper Rat Creek.

4.3 Cumulative Effects

The proposed road realignment would not appreciably increase road density in the Grave Creek watershed (approximately 0.1 mile). No long term adverse effects are anticipated on any streams; water quality and quantity would not change.

Timber harvest has occurred in the vicinity over the past decade. This area is matrix land and was identified in the Northwest Forest Plan as available for scheduled timber harvest (USDA/USDI 1994, p.2-25). Realignment of this road is within the types of activities identified in the Medford District Resource Management Plan (p. 86-88). No impacts identified herein would exceed those directly identified in both plans.

The cumulative effects of the Proposed Action are the same as that submitted with the U.S. Dept. Interior (1996) Rogue River/South Coast Biological Assessment for projects other than timber sales (FY97/FY05).

Chapter 5 - Persons and Agencies Consulted

5.0 Persons and Agencies Consulted

A legal notice will be placed in local newspapers to announce to the public that the Glendale Resource Area is requesting public comments on the proposed management action. In addition, notification of this proposal will be sent to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Dept. of Forestry, county commissioners for the affected county, several environmental groups, and representatives of the timber industry to request their comments. These announcements will be made following completion of this environmental assessment and before a decision is made. The Field Manager will consider all input before reaching a finding or making a decision concerning this proposal.

5.1 Cultural Resource Survey

A cultural survey was completed within the project area by the Glendale Resource Area Archaeologist in 2003. No cultural sites were found.

5.2 List of Preparers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Primary Responsibility</u>
Sherwood Tubman	Ecosystem Planner	NEPA, Team Lead
Vince Randall	Forest Manager	Timber
Loren Wittenberg	Hydrologist, Soil Specialist	Water Quality, Riparian, Soil
Amy Sobeich	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources
Bob Bessey	Fish Biologist	Fisheries
Randy Fiske	Engineer	Roads

The Proposed Action has been screened for compliance with the Endangered Species Act, The American Indian Religious Freedom Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Bureau of Land Management policies related to the ecosystem objectives and concepts in the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan. Furthermore, this action has been screened from a landscape perspective and there are no effects anticipated from this action that would foreclose future management options in relation to the watershed management objectives identified through the Ecosystem Analysis.



Ecosystem Planner

Reviewed for format and consistency

Date

8-18-03

References

USDI-BLM. 1995. Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan. Medford, Oregon

USDA-FS, USDI-BLM. 1994. Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. Pacific Northwest

USDA-FS, USDI-BLM. 2001. Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines. Portland, Oregon